



Wisconsin Department of
Health and Family Services

Preventing the Spread of Influenza in a School Setting How You Can Help

Influenza (the “flu”) is a viral illness that is spread from person to person when people cough or sneeze near each other. The best way to prevent serious illness from the flu is to get immunized. In the past, health officials encouraged all persons over the age of 6 months to receive the “flu shot.” Because there is currently a shortage of vaccine, only persons at high risk for complications of flu should be immunized. It is important to follow

the guidelines listed below to help protect you and others from getting the flu. For more information, visit the website of the Department of Health and Family Services at: <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/communicable/influenza>.

Immunization (Flu Shot)

All students, school personnel, and volunteers in the following categories should be immunized:

1. **Adults aged 65 and over.**
2. **Children 6 to 23 months old.**
3. **Adults and children with chronic medical conditions.***
4. **Women who are pregnant during the flu season (October- March).**
5. **Children age 6 months to 18 years on chronic aspirin therapy.**
6. **Healthcare workers involved in direct patient care.**
7. **Out-of-home caregivers and household contacts of children younger than 6 months.**

*People with chronic medical conditions include those who have required regular medical follow-up or hospitalization during the preceding year because of chronic metabolic diseases (including diabetes mellitus), renal dysfunction, hemoglobinopathies, or immunosuppression (including immunosuppression caused by medications or by human immunodeficiency virus [HIV]).

Coughing and Sneezing

Students, school personnel, and volunteers should practice good health habits when coughing or sneezing by:

1. **Covering their noses and mouths with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.**
2. **Discarding tissue in a waste container immediately after use.**
3. **Washing hands (as outlined below) immediately after disposing of tissue.**

No one should share drinking cups, water bottles, eating utensils, or any other items placed in another person’s mouth.

Washing Hands

To help protect against respiratory illnesses like the “flu”, everyone should wash their hands:

1. **After coughing or sneezing or whenever your fingers touch the inside of the your mouth or nose.**
2. **Before preparing food.**
3. **Before and after eating.**
4. **After hands touch another person with a cough or cold.**
5. **Whenever hands are dirty.**

Hands should be washed with soap and warm water for at least 15 seconds, with rubbing action, then rinsed, and dried with a paper towel. A clean paper towel should be used to turn off water faucets. Tissues, waste containers, soap, and paper towels should be accessible to students and personnel. An effective and convenient alternative to soap and water is cleaning hands with an alcohol gel like Purell®. Students and staff are encouraged to carry a supply of alcohol gel for personal use.

Keeping Sick Persons Away from Others

Students, school personnel, and volunteers with influenza symptoms (fever, chills, sore throat, cough, headache, muscle aches) while at school should go home as soon as possible. If ill and not able to go home immediately, they should be confined in a separate area away from others.

People with influenza should stay at home for at least 5 to 7 days after onset of symptoms.